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CHOUDHURY: Last year File on 4 revealed how Asian gangs were cornering this country’s heroin trade, but things have moved on alarmingly. Tonight we investigate the extent to which organised criminals within Britain’s South Asian communities are involved in murders, kidnappings and illegal immigration.

AHMED: I was completely shocked. A community which was supposed to have the lowest percentage in crime now probably has one of the highest in the United Kingdom.

CHOUDHURY: And File on 4 can reveal that the Metropolitan Police are so concerned, they are setting up a new unit to tackle new South Asian criminals, who won’t let anything or anyone stand in their way.

WOMAN: One of the youths pulled out a machine gun and shot my father. As my dad sort of stumbled and turned around towards me and I saw his face, I knew he had been hurt badly. He was my best friend and he was everything to me.

SIGNATURE TUNE

## ACTUALITY IN PUB

**CHOUDHURY:** A hot summer evening in Tower Hamlets, East London. The area is a contrast of social deprivation and fashionable, upmarket streets where thousands of people go out to socialise. Everything seems normal as the pubs do a roaring trade. But under the surface tensions are running high. Pubs have been targeted, including this one, which was damaged in a firebomb attack.

**WORKER:** The pub was closed. The lady that was working was cleaning up. She opened the door thinking that a cab had arrived to take her home, and there was all these youths outside and they just threw in the petrol bombs.

**CHOUDHURY:** This woman is too frightened to be identified. Like many, she feels there's a concerted effort by Asian gangs to get white people out of Tower Hamlets.

**WORKER:** From what we could hear, it was 'You're on our territory,' and then a week later the boss was coming out of one of the restaurants, and as she walked along, I think there was three youths, but one of them had a gun and held it to her head, but she fought back and chased him. Somebody called the police, but then a wall of silence goes up. People won't come to the area. It will end up being off limits to people. It'll be like a no go area.

**CHOUDHURY:** But it's not simply a race problem. Around 70,000 Bangladeshis live in Tower Hamlets, and they're often the victims of Asian on Asian violence. There have been sixty murders in the borough in the past ten years, and in the last year alone six Asians have been killed here.

## ACTUALITY OF GHETTO BLASTER

**CHOUDHURY:** The Metropolitan Police have now identified Tower Hamlets as a crime hotspot, one of the epicentres for crime across London. The problem is made worse by a growing drug trade.

**YOUTH 1:** In every area there is a dealer who runs the whole area. For example, if I go to this next man's area and try to take his customers, obviously he's going to get pissed. He will try to come back on me. That's when everything starts.

YOUTH 2: That's when the weapons come in, when there's feud between two drug dealers. That's when they start fighting each other, that's when weapons come in, knives and guns.

CHOUDHURY: And have you seen this happen?

YOUTH 1: It's like a normal thing.

YOUTH 2: It's to do with making money.

CHOUDHURY: This explosion in drug crime was predicted by Professor Kamlesh Patel from the University of Central Lancashire when he carried out research in Tower Hamlets a decade ago.

PATEL: In the very early nineties I went to Tower Hamlets and met a lot of young people who spoke to me about the potential drug problem there and what was happening. What it felt like was a time bomb that was waiting to go off. I've gone back basically ten years later and the time bomb has gone off. It's exploded not only in terms of heroin use, but also what's changed over the last five years is, they've gone into areas like crack cocaine, violent crime, prostitution. This is not every single Bengali family, this is a significant number that are moving towards that area of activity.

CHOUDHURY: Why should that be?

PATEL: You've got a very young population, rapidly growing. High unemployment levels. Across the road they see people who are in the city doing really well, entrepreneurial people wanting to get ahead, and markets are close to them.

CHOUDHURY: It's not just Tower Hamlets. File on 4 has seen new figures that show that across London the number of South Asians charged with supplying drugs has shot up by 42% in five years. But what's worrying the police even more is a growth in the number of murders involving South Asians. In London it's gone up 300% in ten years compared to just over 30% for the capital's general population.

## ACTUALITY WITH KNIFE

RUSH: This is called a Cyclone lock knife. When you open the blade up, it locks back ...

CHOUDHURY: Looks sharp.

RUSH: ... and you have to press the handle in order to close the knife again. So if you stab it into anybody, it won't fold up, it will go in ...

CHOUDHURY: At a police headquarters in Barking in East London, an arsenal of weapons are laid out on a table, from heavy brass knuckleduster knives to three foot long ceremonial swords. Roy Rush was the officer in charge of bagging and checking this evidence in the case of a man who was stabbed in broad daylight.

RUSH: Some of these are called ceremonial daggers, but as you can see, if you open this up and pull it out of the sheath, it is extremely sharp.

CHOUDHURY: Ouch, it is, isn't it? We've talking about a 9 inch blade with two separate sidings to it. So when it actually goes into the victim ...

RUSH: It will make two totally separate stab wounds very close together. That's about two and a half foot long. You could chop somebody's head off with that, easily.

CHOUDHURY: One of these types of knives was used to murder Rizwan Mirza, a Muslim, who was on the High Street in North East Ham in April 2003. It was brutal and caught on CCTV. The killer was a Sikh man, Sandeep Singh Bharj. When officers, led by Detective Chief Inspector Jim Condron, searched his home, they found almost thirty different types of weapons.

CONDRON: This was a vicious, unprovoked attack. The victim was cruising as a passenger in a car, talking to friends. We've got good CCTV where, seconds before the attack, they were giving high fives to each other and life was pleasant. I've got it clearly on

CONDRON cont: video the suspect practically running up the road when he saw the victim was there, and viciously swinging him three or four times with a knife, stabbing into the car. The car was stuck in traffic, it couldn't move forward, it couldn't move backwards, so the driver couldn't get away. Unfortunately in the last couple of years we're seeing more and more of this.

CHOUDHURY: In this case, detectives investigated a possible sectarian motive, but they decided it was more likely to be a dispute between rival groups in the area.

CONDRON: He, in fact, was a Sikh, and one of our main problems at the beginning was to try and keep a perspective on the inquiry, because it was quite clear that this altercation did come from previous altercations over previous years between the victim and the suspect – or their associates.

CHOUDHURY: So there had been a history of gang violence?

CONDRON: There had been a history, whether it was gangs or just locals, one lot of locals against another, there had been a history where the victim, for example, had given evidence against associates of the suspect before, and not just once, on a number of occasions.

CHOUDHURY: What has changed to make this happen in the last couple of years?

CONDRON: I think there'll always be pecking orders locally, and a lot of it involves other criminality – drugs, credit cards, phone cards, mobile phones, robbery – and a lot of the time the only way, in my opinion, they can see to assert themselves and get to the top of the pecking order is by having weapons.

CHOUDHURY: Gang feuds – usually over turf and ending in death – are common in London. It's one reason the Met set up Operation Trident – their campaign to tackle crime among Africans and Caribbeans. There are similar patterns emerging in the Asian communities, including the ability to reach for sub-machine guns.

## ACTUALITY IN FOREST GATE

CHOUDHURY: It's Friday on Romford Road in Forest Gate in East London. This is the most important part of the week for Muslims. They get their community news and a special sermon from their Imam. I'm watching as hundreds rush to the Azhar Masjid Mosque, also known as the Azhar Academy. Parking along the residential roads here is all but impossible. Many have literally abandoned their cars, blocking access to homes. A few doors along is the Forest View Hotel, with parking at the back. Every week the owners, Amarjit and Rajinder Singh, would appeal to worshippers not to block or use their customers' spaces. Every week that appeal went unheeded, including one day last August.

WOMAN: There was an argument going on at the back of our hotel, and my dad and Rajinder came inside about two o'clock that afternoon and said they had had an argument with somebody over a car space. My dad was explaining to me how somebody was quite vocal and rude about not being able to park in our private car parking space.

CHOUDHURY: Amarjit Singh's daughter was in the hotel on that day. What happened next was totally unexpected.

WOMAN: About twenty minutes later we heard some noise outside, so myself and Rajinder ran out just to see what it was, and we saw three youths smashing up my dad's van. One of the youths pulled out a machine gun and shot my father. It was the sound of the gun that was so loud. I didn't realise they were real bullets, but as my dad sort of stumbled and turned around towards me and I saw his face, I knew he had been hurt badly, and from that moment I was kind of thinking, 'What is it? Is it a gun?' you know, I've never seen a gun before. But obviously my dad was clenching to his whole body and he was starting to fall to the ground. I'm watching him and I've heard gunshots, so I've sort of moved and started looking at my cousin, and he too is sort of staggering a little bit and he's been shot. And just as he's falling to the ground, the gunman is still standing there and so are his two friends, so basically at that point I've just run back into the hotel. And as I'm running back, I can hear the gun going off again. So he's aimed to fire at me but obviously he's missed because I've started to run, and I just went back inside and I called the police.

CHOUDHURY: What the police find difficult to understand is the senselessness of this killing, and also how the killers went away and came back twenty minutes later armed with machine guns. Detectives have told us there's been a wall of silence and they're no nearer to finding those responsible – which adds further to the family's grief.

WOMAN: It's had a very very very devastating effect on my whole family. Both of those people, my dad, Rajinder, they played a very important role for all of us. They have left behind two widows, brothers, mother. You can't compensate that loss. I mean, in the way that it's happened as well. Rajinder left behind two little kids. His little boy was just about to start school and he was busy buying his uniform, and he wasn't even there for his first day at school. My dad, who was a very funny, kind-hearted, very generous person, and he was my best friend. I can't think of words to do him justice, so I'm just sort of clutching at straws. I can't think of the right words, but he was everything to me and he always will be.

CHOUDHURY: It's families like the Singhs who are the victims of Asian on Asian crime. Asians once felt safe around their own communities, but now, says Amarjit Singh's brother, Gurdip, they don't.

GURDIP: I'm afraid to say Asian kids born in England, they are different completely to their forefathers. We see the violence and the culture which they engage in – carrying dangerous weapons, carrying knives. Sadly some of our Asian friends lost the plot completely. No longer they have any control over what their children do. Asian children in their late teens, early twenties, you see them roaming around in the streets, causing havoc, not thinking of what damage they are doing to their own communities through their misbehaviour.

CHOUDHURY: You seem to be suggesting they've become westernised, to put it simply?

GURDIP: I wouldn't put it that way. If anything, I would say Asian youths of today's day and age, they are just as bad behaved, if not worse than their western counterparts.

CHOUDHURY: According to the latest Met Police figures, almost 70,000 South Asians were victims of crime in 2003 alone. This concerns Lord Ahmed of Rotherham, Britain's first Pakistani peer.

AHMED: I was completely shocked to find that there is so much crime within the Asian community, and very serious crime, and I was shocked to hear so many people that had been murdered in London and other parts of the United Kingdom too.

CHOUDHURY: Why should it have shocked you?

AHMED: Because when we came to this country, first of all there was very little crime within the Asian community. Drugs were never known, violent crime was never heard of, and if you had a police officer knocking on your door, it brought disgrace to the whole community. Now we see not only this huge amount of drug-related crime, but also theft, robberies, armed robberies, and then you have violent crime and gun crime. A community which was supposed to have the lowest percentage of crime now probably has one of the highest in the United Kingdom.

CHOUDHURY: These concerns are borne out by figures from the National Criminal Intelligence Service. We've learnt that across the country, Asians are four times more likely to be associated with organised crime. Despite the fact they represent only 4% of the UK's population, NCIS say 16% of criminal networks involve Asians. That's why Britain's most senior Asian police officer, Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur, who heads the Met's Specialist Crime Directorate, wants to set up a new Operation Trident-style unit to fight what he says is a worrying and rising trend.

GHAFFUR: We have found that the murder rate, for example, in London has tripled over the last decade for South Asians. There is now increasing involvement of South Asian criminals in gun violence. We are finding that South Asians are quite significantly involved in drug importation, trafficking, distribution and actual usage of drugs as well. So in its totality, quite a serious picture has been emerging, and in London what we have seen over the last twelve months is that there's an increasing trend in relation to involvement of South Asians, both as criminals and as victims as well.

CHOUDHURY: Why has this happened?

GHAFFUR: There is quite clearly a breakdown of traditional values, and to a certain extent those are perpetuated by often disadvantage one suffers in certain communities.

GHAFFUR cont: I think there is a huge opportunity being provided for these criminals within communities themselves. There is often a denial in the community that things are actually happening in relation to serious crime, and what that leads to is criminal role models within communities to flourish. This still involves a very small minority of people, but sadly the problem is increasing rather than decreasing.

CHOUDHURY: His unit will be set up in stages. The first bit, gathering intelligence, will happen in the next eight weeks, and the unit should be fully operational within a year. Mr Ghaffur says the success of Operation Trident depended on the cooperation of black communities. Similarly this new venture will need the backing of South Asians. He stresses that he isn't attacking minority communities.

GHAFFUR: I am particularly very sensitive about not stereotyping, stigmatising certain communities. Those people who are committing these particular crimes are of a minority. What I'm concerned is that if you don't work with those communities, there will be increased murder rate, increased gun violence, the harm that is caused to communities by drugs would increase quite significantly, and organised crime will increase. The people who start to commit these crimes will take over these communities, will become the criminal role models, and the problem will escalate.

CHOUDHURY: It's a pretty bleak picture you paint.

GHAFFUR: Well, the experience of the last twelve months has shown that if we don't do something about it, then there will be problems – and they will be severe problems. And the last thing you would want is those communities themselves to create their own crime-ridden ghettos, frankly. But I think the challenge is to get on the front foot in tackling the problem.

CHOUDHURY: But some say the Met's latest initiative is too little, too late.

#### ACTUALITY IN TEMPLE

CHOUDHURY: At a temple used by Tamils in Walthamstow in North East London, worshippers are praying to the Hindu gods. This small community has been rocked by



CHOUDHURY: It's a Saturday night, and around two hundred Tamils are squeezed into a hall in North London. They look on proudly as young children from 7 to 17 sit on a stage playing the traditional instruments imported from Sri Lanka. Most of the 80,000-strong Tamils in London are law-abiding. One of their leaders, Dr Rath-nam Nithi Annan-um is critical of the police for not acting sooner to stop the minority who are out of control.

NITHI: Roughly about three years back we started noticing increase in violence. We immediately went to the police and reported these matters, and the police didn't take it seriously. They didn't take any action.

CHOUDHURY: Why didn't the police act straightaway?

NITHI: Because Tamils are killing the Tamils, so the police were keeping quiet. Simple as that.

CHOUDHURY: And what did you think about that?

NITHI: We were very dissatisfied that the police didn't step into it in the first place. But gradually, when the violence was increasing, the police took it seriously and they were setting up consultancy group, and there the Tamil community actively participated and we were able to bring it under control.

CHOUDHURY: It's a serious accusation though, saying that because Tamils were killing Tamils, that the police didn't act.

NITHI: Yes, it is a serious accusation.

CHOUDHURY: What do the police need to do in the future?

NITHI: What they have done now, continue to do it. Heavy policing within this community is very important.

CHOUDHURY: So they need to be seen out and about?

NITHI: That's right.

CHOUDHURY: But Assistant Commission Tarique Ghaffur denies the Metropolitan Police failed to act properly. In 2003, he says, they set up Operation Enver to tackle specifically Tamil on Tamil crime.

The Tamil community say the police did absolutely nothing until it was almost too late. What would you say to them?

GHAFFUR: Well it's not true. We had Operation Enver running, as far as the Tamils are concerned. The phenomena of Tamil murders is fairly recent. It's over the last couple of years, and in fact this particular operation, we very quickly set up an intelligence cell, we took some pretty swift action, which resulted in a significant number of people being arrested, a large amount of property being recovered from them. And since then we've hardly had any problem.

CHOUDHURY: Operation Trident started three years ago. Isn't this too late for you to start now concentrating on the South Asian criminals, who have had time to flourish?

GHAFFUR: I don't think it is. We've been looking at the problem over the last two to three years, in which it has been increasing. It is far better to get on the front foot and start to tackle the problem when it occurs.

CHOUDHURY: Hardly being on the front foot when people have been warning about this for years, and only now has the Metropolitan Police decided to even think about putting resources in.

GHAFFUR: Well, some people would say yes, that is true, but when you start to look at every bit over the last twelve months, whether that is murder, gun violence, drugs, whether that is economic crime, then it's a rising problem. I entirely disagree with what you are trying to say in terms of Metropolitan Police not listening. We have listened very carefully to what the communities are saying. And you will go out there and you will find that there are communities who will say to you this is an emerging problem and is something that we need to be looking at.

CHOUDHURY: It's not just about violence. Asians are expanding into economic crime. Britain's biggest credit card fraud on the Heathrow Express was masterminded





CHOUDHURY: Those international links have been used for human trafficking. File on 4 has uncovered an illegal immigration scam that uses links between here and Bangladesh.

SHOMIN (VIA INTERPRETER): I thought the work permit was genuine, because I had to take it to the embassy and get a visa, and they would know it was genuine, so I thought it was right.

CHOUDHURY: Shomin was brought here illegally by a gang using forged work permits. He paid £8,000 but found himself stranded and alone at Heathrow Airport.

SHOMIN (VIA INTERPRETER): When I came to England, I found there was no work for me. The agent told me not to contact the employer. I had no work. I had to feed myself, I had to stay in the airport for a long time, because when I phoned my employer, they did not come and collect me.

CHOUDHURY: How do you feel about this?

SHOMIN (VIA INTERPRETER): I was very disappointed. I felt very angry. They take innocent people's money and give them a lot of heartache.

CHOUDHURY: He's now found a job legally and works in the north of England.

#### ACTUALITY IN RESTAURANT

MAN: Two chicken korma and one mutton vindaloo, please.

MAN 2: ... one vindaloo, no problem.

CHOUDHURY: The scam works like this. Curry houses here require staff. To bring them to the UK, restaurateurs have to apply for work permits from the British High Commission in Bangladesh. But middlemen here persuade the owners into letting them handle the paperwork. Once they have the genuine forms, they can copy them and make fraudulent applications to bring large numbers of illegal immigrants over. Abu Tahir is a restaurateur in

CHOUDHURY cont: Leicester. He's had to deal with victims like Shomin turning up on his doorstep looking for a job. He's also had other curry house owners telling him that they have been duped by the middle men and are now under Home Office suspicion and have been stopped from bringing staff into Britain.

TAHIR: I have heard this news from other people from around the country – Sussex, Kent, Luton and Essex – and somebody came to me two days ago and explained this to me this is what happened to him. He is supposed to get two people, which he couldn't, and then he found out that he had already provided six work permits and people are already in this country, but he didn't know nothing about it. His signature was copied and his information was passed, but he didn't know how it happened.

CHOUDHURY: What sort of effect is it having on honest restaurateurs like yourself?

TAHIR: Well, it is giving us a very bad impact. We are losing the credibility from the Home Office, we are losing our reputation from the law, from the Immigrations, from everywhere.

CHOUDHURY: Scams like these can net criminals millions of pounds.

#### ACTUALITY AT DOVER

WOMAN OVER LOUDSPEAKER: This is a security announcement. Passengers are reminded to keep their luggage ...

CHOUDHURY: Around 16 million people pass through here at the Port of Dover every year. It is the hub that links Britain to Europe across the English Channel. Most will come here legally. Yet this is where the National Crime Squad smashed Britain's biggest human trafficking racket. It was masterminded by Sarwan Singh Deo, who was based in Birmingham and was bringing in people from India to the UK via Ethiopia and Dubai. Detective Sergeant Lawrence Gibbons is from the National Crime Squad.

GIBBONS: The gang would obtain British passports with Indian-sounding names, normally by way of burglary or robbery. The photograph on this passport would then be substituted by the forger in the gang to have the illegal immigrant's photograph put in its place. This passport could then be given to the illegal immigrant, who was either in Europe or India, to then travel to the UK, quite often without any problems arising en route. The gang would be careful to ensure that the age and height on the passport roughly matched that of the illegal immigrant, and you would find it very difficult to see anything wrong with the passports. Another method was to obtain Indian passports with indefinite leave to remain. Again, a number are reported stolen or lost to the authorities in the Birmingham area.

#### ACTUALITY IN BIRMINGHAM

CHOUDHURY: The passports used by this gang would then be recycled. Detectives believe the Indian ones were fraudulently obtained through the Indian Consulate here in Birmingham. The building is in the heart of the city's jewellery quarter, and nestles between a Chinese restaurant and jewellery shop. A big Indian flag flutters in the winds. Detective Sergeant Gibbons and his colleagues from the National Crime Squad realised an Indian diplomat, based at these offices, was involved in the operation. They filmed the ringleader, Sarwan Singh Deo, meeting this diplomat not only at his home, but in a disused car park a few miles away from the Consulate.

GIBBONS: We evidenced Deo having an irregular contact with a diplomat from the Indian High Commission. We actually evidenced this diplomat handing over a number of passports to Deo, and Deo paying a fee for these passports which was in excess of the normal fee. We suspect between £300 and £500 per passport. As soon as this happened we did bring it to the attention of the Indian authorities. It's one of those things that our diplomats are afforded diplomatic protection in other countries abroad, just like the Indian diplomats are afforded diplomatic protection in this country. It's extremely frustrating that in normal circumstances we would have interviewed and arrested the diplomat ourselves, but we have to follow the correct channels, and that was to inform the Indian authorities. The diplomat is no longer in the UK. Where he is, I'm unable to say.

CHOUDHURY: Once the Indian authorities were alerted, their government sent in officers from the Central Bureau of Investigation. This is India's highest law enforcement agency, independent of the government. It's similar to the American FBI and has powers to take people to court. The spokesman for the Indian government in Britain, Navdeep Suri, says the government's cooperated fully with both the CBI and Britain.

SURI: You will have instances in any system where one bad egg will spoil things. The fact is that as soon as we came to know about an individual's involvement in completely illegal activities, we launched the most serious investigation possible. So it is not something that anyone is trying to brush under the carpet.

CHOUDHURY: But in this case it was an Indian diplomat working with diplomatic immunity who was able to help these criminals in Britain. Surely someone on your watch failed?

SURI: His diplomatic immunity has nothing to do with this. What is relevant here is that he was abusing an official position. We have taken appropriate action and that action is effective.

CHOUDHURY: So what has happened to this one bad egg, this one diplomat?

SURI: He is back in Delhi, and as soon as the CBI completes its report the action will be taken according to the recommendations of the CBI.

CHOUDHURY: Is he in prison?

SURI: I will not go into that at all until we get the full report of the CBI.

CHOUDHURY: But File on 4 has learned that the top team from India's Central Bureau of Investigation is also investigating procedures at the High Commission in London and other consulate offices in this country.  
How widespread is the problem?

SURI: Again, you are trying to prejudge what the report will say. As I said, this is an issue which is under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

CHOUDHURY: Can you tell me how many diplomats have been sent home?

SURI: It's an internal matter and we don't go into that.

CHOUDHURY: Is it one?

SURI: As I said, it is an internal matter pertaining to the government of India. We do not go into the details.

CHOUDHURY: What's wrong with saying how many diplomats are involved in this?

SURI: Because it is an internal matter of the government of India. It is for us to take action. It is not for Britain or the BBC or anybody else.

CHOUDHURY: From sophisticated passport scams to gang violence, the growth in criminality within the Asian communities is causing real alarm within the police, not only in London, but in other parts of Britain. It is, of course, limited to a small minority of people within those communities. But Professor Kamlesh Patel, who saw the problem coming, says that's not a reason for the law-abiding majority to ignore the problem.

PATEL: I think people bury their heads in the sand for a number of reasons. I think they worry about being stigmatised, stereotyped, pathologised as the bad people. Asians are doing all the bad things here. I think there's an issue about worrying whether they're going to get targeted more and, you know, organisations like the BNP capitalising on that and saying, 'We told you they shouldn't be here anyway.' I wouldn't be doing my job properly unless I said these are issues that do need to be addressed. This is not about saying the Asian community is a bad community. It's not about saying everybody's involved in these activities. It's about saying it's a small number of people, but they are growing, and this is an area that's hurting our community and we need to do something about it. We need to wake up and smell the coffee.

