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THE Tory party has been urged to take action and censure one of its influential MPs after they "spread misinformation" around the ongoing farmers protests in India.

Charandeep Singh, the chief executive of Sikhs in Scotland, raised the formal complaint with the Tory party after one of their Westminster representatives "either knowingly or unknowingly, spread misinformation regarding the world's largest human protest and peaceful protestors".

Blackman, who represents Harrow East for the Tories, is also the executive secretary of the influential 1922 Committee of Conservative MPs.

The Sikhs in Scotland letter, seen by The National, says that Blackman "has fallen below the standards" expected of an MP and argues that he is in breach of the Conservative party's code of conduct.

The complaint refers specifically to two posts from Blackman made on February 5. These posts have garnered almost 70,000 “likes” between them, with tens of thousands of comments and reshares on each.

The MP’s tweets claim that the farmers’ protests currently ongoing in India, which saw around 250 million people protest on a single day in November in perhaps the biggest demonstration in world history, are “relatively miniscule”.

It claims that protests do not attract more than 5000 farmers, and that “clumsily edited images” try to portray the demonstrations as larger than they are.

The Tory’s posts also claim that people are being paid to protest, and threatened with fines if they refuse.

Blackman said this amounted to a “very useful guide to the legislation and the impact on farmers”.

In the letter to the Tory party co-chair, Singh takes care to offer a rebuttal to each of the claims made on Blackman’s posts in full. He also points to the language used, arguing that “British and Mughals have only been mentioned in the infographic to tug at the nationalist heartstrings”.

Sikhs in Scotland have requested the removal of the MP’s tweets and that Blackman be censured “for utilising his privileged position as a Member of Parliament to spread misinformation and diluting the concerns and issues raised by farmers’ unions and allies”.

The protests in India are against the government’s plans to change three laws around farming. These laws were reportedly rushed through without proper consultation, and have been labelled “predatory commercialisation of countryside”.

Protesters say the laws will force Indian farmers to grow cash crops for export, meaning the nation becomes dependent on Western imports of grain, exacerbating the stark hunger problems in the country.

Very little information could be found about the site which originated the infographics, Citti.net, but on the surface it appears to be a pro-Government news outlet. The New Internationalist reported in January that India’s right-wing media had “gone into overdrive” to discredit the farmers’ protests.

Citti.net’s Twitter says it is based in both London and New Delhi. It has around 1500 followers on both that platform and Facebook. It has 140 followers on Instagram and 4000 on Youtube.

Recent posts on Citti.net seem strongly anti-Pakistan, being headlined “How Pakistani grooming gangs keep targeting vulnerable English and Sikh girls” and “How Sikhs, Hindus are falling prey to Pakistan’s psychological warfare – and how to reverse it”.

Others are anti-Islam, carrying headlines such as “Sikh gurus, Hindu sages never lost their humanity when fighting Islamist barbarity” and claiming intolerance and Islamophobia in India is a “total hoax”.

These positions align strongly with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s politics. He has been accused of “remaking India into an authoritarian, Hindu nationalist state”.

Modi’s government faced widespread protests towards the end of 2019 for law changes which were widely read as an attempt to strip India’s 200 million Muslims of their citizenship.

Blackman has a history of supporting Modi's controversial policies, including the revoking of the majority Muslim area of Kashmir's special limited autonomy status in 2019. He was given one of India's top civilian awards, the Padma Shri, in 2020. Blackman's Twitter account also features a photograph of the Indian leader.

The Harrow East MP previously came under fire for hosting an anti-Islamic extremist who praised the genocide of Rohingya Muslims in Burma in parliament, and sharing an "anti-Muslim" post from right-wing extremist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (Tommy Robinson). Blackman has strongly denied both of these allegations.

Singh has previously been awarded a "Point of Light" award by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in recognition of The Sikh Food Bank, a drive he established which has served more than 100,000 meals to families in need through the Covid-19 pandemic.

His work with the food bank also earned him a Special Recognition Award at the Pride of Scotland Awards 2020.

Singh is also the deputy chief executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and has been hailed as "a truly influential force in Scotland, breaking barriers in business and in charity" by its director, Dr Liz Cameron.

The Conservative Party has been approached for comment.

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