



# The Michel test case

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## **The Michel test case-The extradition may have been a diplomatic success, but don't tout it as a political victory**

- The extradition to India of British businessman Christian Michel, alleged to be the middleman in the AgustaWestland helicopters case who bribed officials to secure the deal, is a diplomatic success for a number of reasons.
- India's track record with securing the extradition of fugitives from justice is modest, with only about a third of all requests since 2002 being accepted.
- Amongst the 44 countries India has extradition treaties with, the United Arab Emirates has been the most amenable; it has deported or extradited 19 of 66 fugitives to India in the past decade and a half.
- A reason for the low success rate in the past is the perception that India's criminal justice system delivers too slowly.
- However, it is short-sighted for the government and the ruling party to play the diplomatic success as a political victory.
- The government must be aware that its actions in the Michel case are under close scrutiny, not just from the UAE, whose courts deliberated for some months on whether to send him to India, but other countries where India has about 150 pending requests at present.
- If handled professionally and without politicisation, Mr. Michel's extradition could reveal important leads in the helicopters case.
- It would also bolster India's reputation as a country serious about ensuring that justice is served, and expeditiously so.

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