

Prime Minister

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22-24 March are absolutely clear in the diary at present but you have little room for manoeuvre.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 July 1981

Agree to open the Gala Concert & the Hayward Gallery Exhibition but not the Science Exhibition? Three openings would be too much, I think.

Dear Michael,

Visit by Mrs Gandhi to UK: March 1982

Thurs 14/7
If Mrs Gandhi is here - we have to do

When the Prime Minister visited India in April, she invited Mrs Gandhi to visit the UK in March 1982, at the time of the opening of the Festival of India. You agreed earlier that 22 to 24 March 1982 would be acceptable planning dates. The Festival will formally begin with a Gala Concert at the Royal Festival Hall on 22 March. On 23 March two major exhibitions will open, one of the History and Present Day Achievements of Indian Science and Technology at the Science Museum.

as much as possible.

Mrs Gandhi's initial response to the invitation was to say that it was too early to make up her mind. The Indians have now confirmed that Mrs Gandhi has agreed to visit the UK in March. They say that a visit starting on 22 March would 'probably be all right', but add that the precise dates of her visit must still depend upon the Parliamentary timetable in India. The Indian budget will still be under discussion at the time.

We now need to press for Indian agreement to exact dates for the visit. Although the Festival would not be its sole purpose, an early announcement would give added prestige to the Festival and be of assistance in the renewed fund-raising activities. It would be valuable to be able to confirm that the Prime Minister and Mrs Gandhi, as Joint Patrons of the Festival, would be able to attend the Gala Concert on 22 March. As the first event of the Festival and the one which potential sponsors see as the most effective from the point of view of advertising their involvement, it is important that it be seen to be a prestigious event. It would lose much of its impact if the Patrons were not able to be present.

The Indians have also suggested that the two Prime Ministers might jointly open the Hayward Gallery Exhibition on 23 March. They have not mentioned the Exhibition at the Science Museum, perhaps because it is at an earlier stage of planning. Nevertheless, the Science Museum Exhibition is very much an Indian initiative, and it is known that Mrs Gandhi considers it important that modern India and its technological achievements should be properly represented. It is quite likely that Mrs Gandhi may want to open the Science Exhibition herself, or in conjunction with the Prime Minister. Neither of the Exhibitions would be inappropriate for involvement by the two Prime Ministers, but given the likely extent of Mrs Thatcher's other commitments it is important to establish an order of priorities. We consider that the first priority is attendance at the



Gala Concert which launches the Festival.

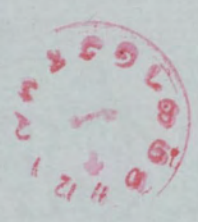
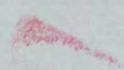
We shall of course consult you about other aspects of the visit nearer the time.

Subject to your views we shall now instruct Sir John Thomson to seek precise dates for Mrs Gandhi's visit. It would be helpful to know whether we may go firm on the dates 22 to 24 March and whether, if the Indians see difficulty, there is any possibility of adjusting the dates (though we think it essential that the period of the visit includes 22 March). As you know, we are separately seeking dates for the State Visit of Sultan Qaboos which will not conflict with Mrs Gandhi's.

yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1



14 JUL 1981

Faint, illegible markings at the bottom of the page.

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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

①
I am sure 'A' is right,
Content to leave matters on
this basis for the time being?

28 July 1981

Dear Michael,

Phnt 29/7

Yes
ms

Visit of Mrs Gandhi to UK: March 1982

Your letter of 17 July confirmed that we should seek firm Indian agreement that the dates of Mrs Gandhi's visit should be 22 - 24 March 1982. Sir John Thomson has now discussed dates with Mrs Gandhi personally. He has reported that Mrs Gandhi understands the position, and has reserved 22 - 24 March to visit London. But she has also said that she must reserve the right to leave a question mark over the visit for broad political and particularly parliamentary reasons. She added that she had been invited to visit the Nordic countries, and implied that she might wish to make this visit at about the same time.

This leaves us in an unsatisfactory position. Although Mrs Gandhi has confirmed that she hopes to come in March, she does not wish to commit herself to exact dates now. So the visit cannot be regarded as firm.

A | Provided you see no difficulty, however, we recommend that no further action be taken for the time being to press Mrs Gandhi to commit herself. She is a somewhat reluctant traveller and clearly wishes to make a final judgement about the visit later. We propose to revert to the matter in the autumn.

Meanwhile, if any press line becomes necessary, we would propose to say that Mrs Gandhi has accepted in principle the Prime Minister's invitation to visit the United Kingdom next year but dates have still to be settled.

yours ever
Rodrick Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

Copy to *Indra*
Mr Alexander No 10
I receive.

GR 80

CONFIDENTIAL

Roy L.

CONFIDENTIAL

FM DELHI 020530Z NOV 81
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 822 OF 2 NOVEMBER.

3/10/81
Ravi Stephens
Noted
cl. *Amble*

FROM EWENS.

UKDEL CANCUN TELNO 24: MRS GANDHI'S VISIT TO BRITAIN.

1. I SPOKE TO RANA (MRS GANDHI'S OFFICE) ON 31 OCTOBER.
HE SAID THAT WE COULD TAKE IT THAT MRS GANDHI WOULD ARRIVE
IN LONDON ON 21 MARCH. A THREE-DAY VISIT WOULD BE AS MUCH
AS SHE COULD MANAGE, IN VIEW OF THE IMMINENCE OF THE INDIAN
BUDGET. WE COULD THEREFORE RECKON ON HER STAYING OVER THE
22ND, 23RD, AND 24TH. HE UNDERTOOK TO LET ME HAVE THE EXACT
ETA AND ETD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THOMSON
LIMITED
SAI
NEWS
PCI
SEC
CRI
PS

PS/LPS
PS/MR HURD
PS/PUS
SIR J. GRAHAM
MR GOODISON

THIS TELEGRAM
WAS NOT
ADVANCED

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Included JS
cc Press
e

31 July 1981

VISIT OF MRS. GANDHI TO THE UK

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 28 July on this subject, and accepts the advice in it.

MODBA

Roderic Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

FILE

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India

17 July 1981

Visit by Mrs. Gandhi to the UK : March 1982'

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me of 14 July. She agrees that we should now try to go firm on the dates 22-24 March.

As regards Mrs. Gandhi's programme here in London, the Prime Minister would be prepared to accompany her both to the Festival Hall on 22 March and to the opening of both the major exhibitions referred to in your letter.

There is virtually no prospect of adjusting the dates for this visit.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Roderic Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.