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10 DOWNING STREET

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From the Private Secretary

21 December 1981

Festival of India

Thank you for your letter of 14 December.

The Prime Minister ^{would} be delighted if it proved possible for Her Majesty The Queen to open the Hayward Gallery Exhibition during the afternoon of 22 March. Since this would then become the first event in the Festival, the Prime Minister considers that she and Mrs. Gandhi, as joint patrons, ought also to attend.

As regards your last paragraph, the Prime Minister doubts whether it would be appropriate for one of the patrons to open the Hayward Gallery or Science Museum Exhibitions in the presence of a member of the Royal Family. It seems better that, if The Queen cannot be involved, either another member of the Royal Family should conduct the opening ceremonies, probably without the Prime Minister being present, or that the Prime Minister and Mrs. Gandhi should do so.

B/F. { I should be grateful if you could let me have early in January a draft programme illustrating how the Prime Minister is likely to be involved both in the Festival of India and in Mrs. Gandhi's official visit. The week of Mrs. Gandhi's visit is already particularly busy for the Prime Minister and we may well have difficulty in fitting everything in.

A. J. COLES

Roderic Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 December 1981

*Dear John,*Festival of India

My letter of 3 December indicated that we should shortly be consulting the Prime Minister about arrangements for Mrs Gandhi's proposed visit to Britain at the time of the opening of the Festival of India (March 1982) and about attendance at Festival events.

We shall be writing separately about the detailed programme for Mrs Gandhi's visit, but we should be glad of the Prime Minister's views now on the specific question of Royal attendance at Festival events.

It has been agreed in principle that the Gala Concert at the Royal Festival Hall which will formally open the Festival on the evening of 22 March, will be the first of the three most important events associated with the Festival. The other two are the exhibition of Indian painting and sculpture at the Hayward Gallery (currently scheduled to open on 23 March) and the exhibition of Science, Technology and Medicine at the Science Museum (to open on 23 or 24 March).

It is clear that the Indians would like Royal participation. In particular Mrs Gandhi has let it be known that she would like The Queen to inaugurate the Festival. The Indians will have it in mind that The Queen opened other comparable events such as the World of Islam Festival in 1974 and smaller ones such as the Sri Lanka Exhibition at the Commonwealth Institute in July this year. During his recent visit to Britain, the Indian Foreign Minister also put the request for The Queen to inaugurate the Festival to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, and Indian wishes are now receiving publicity in India.

/With this

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street



*Passage deleted and closed, 40 years,
under FOI Exemption, QWayland
25 September 2012*

It is our view that it would be highly desirable if Her Majesty could accommodate a Festival of India engagement in her programme on 22 or 23 March, if necessary by rearranging other commitments. The best option would be for her to join the Prime Minister and Mrs Gandhi in attending the Gala Concert at the Royal Festival Hall which will mark the opening of the Festival on the evening of 22 March, but in view of Her Majesty's commitment to the Royal Command Film Performance this does not seem feasible. The second best option would be for her to open the Hayward Gallery exhibition during the afternoon of 22 March, if it can be brought forward by 24 hours, as this also could symbolise a Royal Opening of the Festival.

*Passage deleted and closed, 40 years, under
FOI Exemption, QWayland, 25 September 2012*

Mrs Gandhi is taking a close personal interest in the Festival and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is confident that a successful visit by Mrs Gandhi and a successful Festival of India will be of great benefit to relations with India in all fields. By the same token, we also stand to lose a great deal if the Indians feel that we are not doing justice to what they regard as a major attempt to project a fresh image of India in the UK (and subsequently in other Western European countries which are competing with us for business and influence in India).

The purpose of this letter therefore is to ensure that the Prime Minister is content for us to discuss further with the Palace whether arrangements could be made for The Queen to be associated with the opening of the Festival.

Should the attendance of The Queen prove not to be possible we would recommend that other Royal members should be invited to the other two principal events: the Duke of Gloucester or Princess Alexandra to the opening of the exhibition at the Hayward Gallery and the Duke of Edinburgh to the opening of the exhibition at the Science Museum. The opening ceremonies would in these instances be performed by one of the Patrons

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"in the presence of" the Royal member(s). We should be grateful to know whether the Prime Minister would also be content with this arrangement.

Yours P^{ro}
Robbie Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

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