



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
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MO 6/11

19th October 1983

*Prime Minister.*  
 The only time you could see the Indian Defence Minister is on 7 November, the day of the Indo-British Summit. You will be coming back from Lequers in the afternoon. Do you want to see him at, say, 6.00 p.m.?  
 A.J.C. 24/10.

*Yes - they have helicopters in a big number of*  
 Dear Tim,

Mr Venkataraman, the Indian Defence Minister, is visiting the UK early next month from 6th-10th November at the Secretary of State's invitation. We would very much hope that the Prime Minister could spare the time to see Mr Venkataraman for a brief courtesy call. A personality note is attached.

It is important that we strike the right chord with the Indians from the outset. The Foreign Office regard Mr Venkataraman as being on a par with the Indian Foreign Minister as the member of Mrs Gandhi's Cabinet most important to British interests and have been trying for some years to persuade him to visit this country both in his previous capacity of Finance Minister and, since January 1982, as Minister of Defence.

This particular invitation arose out of Sir John Nott's visit to India in September last year. While in the normal course of events we would hope to be able to match the very generous hospitality which the Indians showed then, the reason for extending an invitation at this time is primarily to build on the sizeable defence sales, which could be as much as £1 billion in the coming year, and wider Defence contacts.

The Prime Minister will be aware (she herself wrote to Mrs Gandhi about this) that the Indians recently signed a contract for Sea King helicopters and Sea Eagle anti-ship missiles worth a total of "250 million". Mr Venkataraman was the Minister responsible for awarding this contract and a call on the Prime Minister (although she would have seen Mrs Gandhi in New York on 30th September) would provide an opportunity to thank the Indian Defence Minister as well.

If the Prime Minister felt able to receive Mr Venkataraman, the ideal time would be the afternoon of Monday 7th November. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary has expressed a wish to see Mr Venkataraman, a former Finance Minister colleague, if at all possible. At the moment the call is planned for 1800 on 7th November. We understand that Sir Geoffrey Howe may be returning

T Flesher Esq



from a meeting with the Prime Minister to receive Mr Venkataraman. There may therefore be some scope for dovetailing a call on the Prime Minister with the proposed call on the Foreign Secretary. If, however, a call on 7th November proves impossible to arrange, then we would not necessarily wish to press the Prime Minister to see Mr Venkataraman at any other time although there is some scope in his programme to accommodate a call around 1800 on either Tuesday 8th or Wednesday 9th November. The Indian Defence Minister is due to depart early on 10th November.

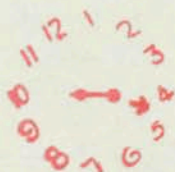
I am copying this letter to the Foreign Secretary's Office.

*yours ever*

(W ANDERTON) (MISS)

*Wendy*

20 OCT 1983



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

David Barclay ✓  
*in diary*



BF

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

26 October, 1983.

Indian Defence Minister

Thank you for your letter of 19 October.  
Mrs. Thatcher could see Mr. Venkataraman at  
6 o'clock pm on 7 November.

I am sending a copy of this letter to  
Peter Ricketts (Foreign and Commonwealth  
Office).

A. J. COLES

Miss Wendy Anderton,  
Ministry of Defence.

D. R. VENKATARAMAN

Minister of Defence.

Born 1910. Educated as a lawyer. He was imprisoned from 1942-44 for his part in the 'Quit India Movement' and in 1945 he defended Indian National Army soldiers under trial for treason in Singapore. He became a Trade Union worker and was elected to the provisional parliament in 1950 and then to the Lok Sabha from 1952-57 and again since 1977. He was Minister for Industry and Labour in the Tamil Nadu Government from 1957-67 and a Member of the Planning Commission from 1967-71. He has been Managing Editor of the 'Labour Law Journal' since 1971.

He was a Member of the Indian delegation to the UN General Assembly from 1953-61. He was appointed Minister of Finance in January 1980 and Minister of Defence in January 1982.

Venkataraman made his mark during his period as a Tamil Nadu Minister and gained much of the credit for the successful industrial development of the state in the 1960s. He split with Mrs Gandhi in 1969 but returned to her faction of the Congress in 1976. Venkataraman is a quiet spoken dignified man who has the respect of his staff. He is probably the only Union Cabinet Minister at present who is independent minded enough to make a mark of his own and while in the Ministry of Finance he wielded a major influence on economic policy. He successfully resisted Sanjay Gandhi's encroachments during the early days of the present Government. His eyesight is not good and his transfer to Defence is possibly in deference to his health problems.

Married with 3 daughters.