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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 January 1984

Dear John,

India

For meeting folder  
on 25 January.

A.J.C. 19.

The Indian High Commissioner, Dr Seyid Muhammad, will pay a farewell call on the Prime Minister at 10.00 on Wednesday 25 January. You asked for a brief.

Dr Muhammad has been High Commissioner since September 1980. He will depart on 12 February. Although Dr Muhammad's contribution to the development of Indo-British relations has been limited (and somewhat overshadowed by the private efforts of Mr Swraj Paul), relations with India during his time in London have been excellent.

I enclose a personality note on Dr Muhammad and a short brief.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL

India: UK Relations Pt 3

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AA



DMR

M. Coleg.

①

10.00 - 10.30

Wed, JAN 25<sup>th</sup>

CR 911

PRIME MINISTER

Could you bear to see the Indian High Commissioner before he leaves London on 12 February?

Yes

We have been resisting a number of attempts to get you to attend farewell meals for him (on the grounds that you would then have to attend meals for many departing Ambassadors and High Commissioners). But he rang me today with a strong plea that he should be allowed to call and say goodbye. Given the fact that you have just been to India and given your relationship with Mrs. Gandhi, I think it is just reasonable to give him 20 minutes or so. Agree?

A.S.C.

Yes mb

6 January 1984

Mr Coles.

We spoke on Friday eve (6 Jan).

If you can persuade the PM otherwise,

pl let me know. I will then talk to

Mr Gohel who is awaiting a response

to his request. Stephen 9/1

PRIME MINISTER

You have already refused the invitation to attend the Farewell Dinner for the Indian High Commissioner. In the attached letter Mr. Gohel asks if you could send a message to be read out.

I have talked to John Coles. We are both reluctant as High Commissioners etc. leave all the time.

If you decide not to send a message, I will talk personally to Mr. Gohel and explain.

Agree not to send a message?

Stephen

Stephen Sherbourne

4th January, 1984

We will send a  
message. We welcomed  
him with a cheque book.  
It would be cheeky  
not to send a message  
at

FAREWELL CALL ON THE PRIME MINISTER BY THE INDIAN HIGH  
COMMISSIONER: 25 JANUARY 1984

POINTS TO MAKE

1. Indo-British relations have flourished in recent years. Highly successful Royal Visit last November. Her Majesty's appreciation reflected in Her Christmas broadcast.
2. Warm personal friendship with Mrs Gandhi. Glad of opportunities last year in New York in September and in New Delhi at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November to renew personal links and to pay another memorable visit to India. Valued recent visits to UK by Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers.
3. Commercial relations good. Considerable growth in past three years. Many major projects, notably Rihand Super Thermal Power Station. Look forward to similar successes in near future. In recent years defence sales also increased steadily. Largest net bilateral aid programme. Reflects importance we place on relationship.
4. Festival of India 1982 enormous success. Grateful for your personal contribution. Brought greater awareness of India and her achievements to British public. This awareness increased by 'Gandhi' film and many other recent films, TV programmes and books.
5. Have valued all you have done to advance Indo-British relations during your time in office. Confident relations will continue to grow in warmth to our mutual benefit. Best wishes for your return home. Please convey my good wishes to Mrs Gandhi.



## BACKGROUND

1. Relations in the past two/three years have been better than for some time past. Extremely successful visit by The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh last November reflected in content of Her Majesty's Christmas broadcast, much of which was devoted to India.
2. Frequent Indo-British official and Ministerial contacts. The Indian Foreign Minister, Mr Narasimha Rao and the Defence Minister, Mr Venkataraman both made visits to the UK in November 1983. Both called on the Prime Minister. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry visited India from 8-13 January to attend the Indo-British Trade Economic Committee meeting.
3. India important to Britain as export market. 1982 UK exports to India were £805 million and imports from India £379 million. Equivalent figures for January - October 1983 were £651 million and £284 million respectively. British companies have won a number of valuable contracts for large scale projects - power stations, coal mines etc. Particularly noteworthy the £240 million Rihand Super Thermal Power Station contract won by Northern Engineering Industries following discussions between Prime Minister and Mrs Gandhi March 1982. Other large scale projects in prospect, notably modernisation of the Durgapur Steel Plant originally built by Britain in the 1950s. Also substantial defence sales: Jaguar, Sea Harrier, Sea King, Sea Eagle.
4. India receives the largest proportion by far of UK bilateral aid (roughly one quarter) - £110 million in 1983-84 - and Britain is India's largest net bilateral aid donor. All British aid since 1975 has been in form of grants. India is also a major recipient of World Bank and European Community Aid Funds, in addition to benefiting other international aid agencies to which UK makes substantial contributions.
5. Highlight of cultural interchange was Festival of India, March to November 1982. Mrs Gandhi, joint patron of the Festival with the Prime Minister, took a close personal interest. Programme /included



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included major exhibitions, performances and other events reflecting Indian civilisation and achievements, ancient and modern. Mrs Gandhi known to have been particularly gratified. Film 'Gandhi' released 1982 made considerable impact in UK. Stimulated other films on India now being shown. Festival has had far-reaching influence and inspired increasing interest in India and things Indian in UK.

Sikh Activists in the UK

6. The Indian Government have recently expressed concern at the activities in the UK of Sikh proponents of the creation of an independent Sikh state (Khalistan) in India. There have been reports that Sikh activists will announce the formation of a government of Khalistan on 26 January, Indian Republic Day, and mount demonstrations against the Indian High Commission at which the Indian flag and constitution would be burned. We have taken the line that we in no way condone the activities of Sikh extremists, but that action against them can only be taken if they transgress the law. It is not an offence under English law to abuse the flag or the constitution of another state or to purport to set up a government for an entity within another state. We have assured the Indian High Commission that the police will take all appropriate steps to protect the High Commission and its staff.



DR V A SEYID MUHAMMAD

High Commissioner to the UK.

Born 1923; educated at London (PhD and Bar-at-Law); practised Law 1948-65; Advocate General of Kerala 1965-67; Standing Counsel of the Union of India in the Supreme Court 1967-71; Senior Adviser to Indian delegation to the UN 1971; Alternative delegate to the UN General Assembly 1975-77; Member of Parliament 1973-77 and 1977-79.

Though he took part in the 'Quit India Movement' in 1942 and was imprisoned at the time, Dr Muhammad has warm memories of the time he spent in Britain for higher education. Though he seems to have quite a good brain, he is laborious and rather inarticulate in style and inexperienced in international affairs. But his appointment was not mere reward for unremitting loyalty to Mrs Gandhi; he split with her in 1978 and was a member of the Congress (U) until that party went into government with Charan Singh in 1979.

Married with two sons and two daughters, he and his wife are both naturally friendly and unaffected. Neither shines socially. Though a Muslim, Dr Muhammad drinks whisky.



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10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

A somewhat embarrassed  
Dr. Muhammad rang me this  
afternoon to say that the  
Indian Government, despite all  
his farewell calls, had now  
asked him to stay on until  
May. I promised to let you  
know.

A. J. C.

27 February 1984

file

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cc: Mr. Sherborne

11 January 1984

INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER

Mr. J. K. Gohel of the UK Anglo Asian Conservative Society has asked whether the Prime Minister would send a message which could be read out at a farewell dinner for the Indian High Commissioner at the Hilton Hotel on 1 February. The Prime Minister has decided to meet this request.

BF/ I should be grateful if you could let me have a suitable draft message by the end of next week.

A. L. COLES

Roger Bone, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

9 January 1984

INDIA

The Indian High Commissioner rang me last week to ask whether he could call on the Prime Minister before he leaves London on 12 February.

Although we try to discourage such calls, I believe that there is a case for agreeing to this request, partly because of the Prime Minister's relationship with Mrs. Gandhi and partly because Mrs. Thatcher has recently visited India. Agreement to the request will also help us to continue to resist the attempts which are being made to get the Prime Minister to attend a farewell meal for Dr. Muhammad (there is no question of this). You told me on the telephone that you agreed with this reasoning.

The Prime Minister has agreed to see Dr. Muhammad for thirty minutes at 10 o'clock on Wednesday, 25 January. I have so informed his office. I should be grateful for a short brief in due course.

A. J. COLES

P.F. Ricketts, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.



United Kingdom Anglo Asian Conservative Society

PLEASE REPLY TO MEGHRAJ COURT, 18 JOCKEY'S FIELDS,  
LONDON, WC1R 4BW. tel. no. 01-831 6881

32 Smith Square Westminster London SW1P 3HH Telephone 01-222 9000 Telex 8814563

President: THE RT. HON. MARGARET THATCHER MP

Chairman: Jayvantsinh Gohel

28th December, 1983

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher MP,  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
LONDON, SW1.

Dear Mrs. Thatcher,

Kindly refer to my letter dated 14th December, 1983, regarding the Farewell Dinner to the Indian High Commissioner to the U.K., Dr. V. A. Seyid Muhammed .

Due to circumstances beyond everyone's control the Dinner has had to be fixed to take place on 1st February, at the Hilton Hotel, London W1.

I can fully understand that because of various demands on your time etc., you may not be able to grace this occasion but can you kindly let me have a suitable message from you personally which I can have read out at the Dinner.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Jay Gohel

J. K. GOHEL

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