



Premadasa

Agre 4

Ans

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

28 September 1979

Dear Michael,

Sri Lanka: Victoria Dam Scheme

In his letter of 13⁵ August Bryan Cartledge recorded that the Prime Minister had informed Mr Premadasa of HMG's support for the Victoria Dam scheme during a luncheon in Lusaka on 6 August.

In a statement to the Sri Lanka Parliament, Mr Premadasa has said he has invited Mrs Thatcher to inaugurate the project, and has suggested that the next anniversary of Independence (4 February 1980) would be a good time. This presumably derived from nothing more than the routine courtesies exchanged when Mr Premadasa called at No 10 (Bryan Cartledge's letter of 20 July): no formal invitation has been received. However, an invitation to the Prime Minister is evidently being considered in Colombo.

There will, in fact, be little, if anything, to be "inaugurated" in February. The contracts will not be awarded until January; the successful contractor will need to spend about a year preparing the site before the first concrete is poured (early 1981); and the project will not be completed before the end of 1984. We had not therefore envisaged the Sri Lankan Government coming forward with so early an invitation. We naturally want to extract maximum credit for the UK, and we are keeping in mind the fact that the particular British contribution to the whole scheme - the Victoria Dam - will be perhaps the most evident symbol of progress to the average Sri Lanka citizen. (Other donors are expected to pay for the necessary but less memorable irrigation ditches etc downstream.) The name Victoria is a happy coincidence, and at some stage we will want to make an occasion (perhaps the switching-on of power) as "British" as possible.

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| In these circumstances we assume you would prefer us to try to fend off any invitation to the Prime Minister for February 1980. We could not exclude the possibility of a high level visit at a later time when there is something worthwhile to inaugurate. But it would be sensible to plan this around a properly considered South Asian tour.

*Could not possibly
do while in house
sitting out*

yours ever

Roderic Lyne

M O D'B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street

R M J Lyne
Private Secretary

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Tour



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 October 1979

SRI LANKA: VICTORIA DAM SCHEME

You wrote to me on 28 September about the possibility of the Prime Minister visiting Sri Lanka in February 1980 in connection with the "inauguration" of the Victoria Dam.

I can confirm that there could be no question of the Prime Minister visiting Sri Lanka at this time. Apart from anything else the House will be sitting.

There would of course be no objection to your pursuing at some future date the possibility of the Prime Minister making a South Asian tour. It is not obvious that such a tour would have priority over other possible tours that might be proposed.

M. O'D. B. ALEXANDER

R.M.J. Lyne, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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